



from the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
P.O. Box 11867 • Room 227 Blatt Building
Columbia, South Carolina, 29211
Communications Office, (803) 734-6164 • Dana Yow
www.sceoc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, January 3, 2007

SC accountability system ranked at the top of national report

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The special South Carolina-focused supplement to the Quality Counts 2007 Report can be found online at www.sceoc.org, under "In the News." The full report, "From Cradle to Career: Connecting American Education from Birth Through Adulthood," can be found online at www.edweek.org.*

Columbia – Nine years following the passage of landmark legislation that set into motion a system of high academic standards, assessments, training, public reporting, and assistance, South Carolina has been ranked No. 1 in a national ranking for standards, assessment, and accountability.

Quality Counts 2007: From Cradle to Career, the 11th annual report card on the state of school reform nationwide, was released today. The report uses a variety of sources for its annual evaluations, including data from the Nation's Report Card (National Assessment of Education Progress.) South Carolina's improvement in both the fourth grade science and eighth grade math assessments is currently the fastest in the nation.

"This recognition clearly shows the commitment this state has placed on raising student achievement," stated Harold Stowe, EOC Chairman. "Let this inspire us to remain relentless and provide a catalyst to urge further education improvement."

Furthermore, Stowe stated the South Carolina General Assembly and educators at the state and local level should be recognized for their continued commitment to schools.

"A great many people have worked tirelessly to promote continuous improvement in this state and they are to be commended," Stowe stated. "Lawmakers maintained their investments in students, educators, and schools even when times were tough."

Stowe urged that while we reflect on our successes, we must not turn our attention away from the challenges that remain. The Quality Counts “State Achievement Index, which includes current academic performance and gains students have made over time, subtracted points for NAEP 2005 reading scores, AP scores, and high school graduation rates that were below the national average.

“Research has shown an almost one-to-one correlation between middle school reading proficiency and on-time graduation rates so I cannot overemphasize how critical reading proficiency is to our students,” stated Stowe. “Without a strong foundation in reading, we cannot expect our students to succeed in other subjects and in life. We cannot tackle South Carolina’s low graduation rate without dealing with the critical academic need area, which is reading.”

This year’s report also uses 13 indicators to establish a new “Chance-for-Success” Index, which includes economic and societal indicators such as family income, parental employment, parent education, and the percentage of adults with college degrees. South Carolina’s Chance for Success Index rank is 41st out of 49 states and the District of Columbia.

“The health and well-being of South Carolina’s children is declining and family poverty is increasing,” stated Stowe. “However, our data indicate that what adults in schools and communities *do* makes a difference. Schools, parents, and communities can be successful in raising the achievement levels of all students to a high level regardless of the risk factors students bring to school with them.”

“We have clearly made substantial progress in our system since the passage of the Education Accountability Act in 1998 and I applaud the efforts of all of the individuals and groups who continue their commitment,” said Stowe.

Established by the EAA, the EOC is an independent, non-partisan, 18-member legislative committee made up of educators, business persons, and elected officials who serve by virtue of their elected position or by appointment of the legislature or governor. It bears responsibilities for the development and improvement of SC’s educational accountability system and for making recommendations to ensure the continuous improvement of schools.